

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

No. 47

SEPTEMBER 18th, 1940

DEAR MEMBER,

As our thoughts turned to the day of National Prayer the people of London and its environs saw on the Saturday night the whole sky over London aglow with the fires which the air-raids had started. This was the beginning of the continuous night bombing of London with intensive raids during the day. You know what has been happening and I need not write about it.

In these experiences we are discovering our solidarity as a nation. We cannot sufficiently give thanks for the spirit which we see on every hand—for the courage, endurance, absence of panic, good humour and inexhaustible fund of helpfulness and service. It is God's gift to our nation in answer to our prayers and it fills us with hope. A new attitude to life is breaking through the crust of our selfishness. If man's true life consists in loving, many are entering to-day into a fuller life. If by prayer and perseverance we can hold on to the new meanings and values we have the foundations on which a new order can be reared.

THE SUPPLEMENT

I have urged from the first number of The News-Letter that there is no more vital issue for the nation than the question of its youth.

When this letter reaches you we may be in the midst of invasion. That is not a reason for holding up the supplement. Some of you may be too much occupied to read it at once. But, like Nehemiah's builders of old, we have in this war to fight and build at the same time. Our heritage has to be defended not only against assault from without, but against decay from within through lack of vision and creative act. For days or weeks every thought and activity of most of us may have to be concentrated on the immediate task. But even for winning the war, if it is prolonged, and certainly for the kind of future which will make it worth while to win the war, the nation must find leisure of mind and spiritual energy to deal with the problem of its youth.

A number of you were interested in the reference to the County Badge Scheme in C.N.-L., No. 38, and have written for information about it. The present supplement gives a fuller explanation. But, as you will see, its concern is not so much with the movement in itself as with the much bigger question of the steps which can and must be taken in wartime to enable the coming generation to play its full part both in the war and in the future beyond. I believe, with many others, that for the reasons stated in the supplement the County Badge Plan provides the clue.

The material on which the article is based is several memoranda by some of the most competent authorities on the subject, which were put into my hands. My share in the article is limited to bringing the material within the compass of a supplement and presenting it in the form that seemed to me best to serve the purpose of The News-Letter and meet the needs of our members. I was given free use of the material and the ideas, the formulation and, to a large extent, even the language have been supplied by those who have a knowledge and understanding of the subject to which I can lay no claim.

AN ENCOURAGING LETTER

The following are extracts from a letter from the Bishop of Guildford:

"You have asked for the communication of experiences which may be of importance for the future of the country after the war. I have been greatly interested this summer by the settling in West Surrey of five residential schools of elementary and central school children. I have been brought into touch with both the children and the teachers.

As I have read the supplement to C.N.-L., No. 45, I still more have wanted to write to you because I am sure there are real elements of promise in these schools which touch on all the three main points in your letter—man's dependence on nature, his fellow-men, and God. There is no doubt whatever about the marked physical improvement of the children, but there are even more interesting things than that. The team spirit which has developed, notably in one case where the boys and girls came from very rough surroundings, has been splendid; new vistas have opened out for the children themselves.

I do not want to trouble you with a long letter, but to come to the deepest thing of all, I have little doubt that there is a religious movement going on among these teachers and transferring itself to the children. The whole experience has been a very moving one to me and has left me with a great sense of hope for the future if this type of school for this type of child can go on after the war. The crux of the situation no doubt lies in keeping up the natural touch of the children with their own homes, but the teachers have kept their eyes well turned in that direction."

BROADCASTS BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

The Archbishop of York is giving a series of talks on "The Hope of a New World" beginning on September 19th and continuing weekly for six weeks at 7.40 p.m. Some groups have already arranged to listen to these talks and discuss them.

THE NEWS-LETTER SERVICE

Air-raids, as many of us know by experience, interfere with both locomotion and business. We shall do our utmost to maintain the regular service of the News-Letter, but if copies arrive late or an issue is suspended you will know the reason. Work does not stop at 20, Balcombe Street when the sirens sound, but some of us have more than ordinary difficulty in getting there and interruptions of one kind or another are constant.

I have a large pile of letters that I would like to answer but shorter working days leave less time for correspondence. All letters which reach us are carefully read, and my gratitude to many of you, even if it has to remain unexpressed, is real and deep.

These explanations are intended chiefly for our members overseas; those who live in London do not need them.

Two new volumes initiating the second series have been published in the C.N.-L. Books. These are *Christianity and the Machine Age*, by Eric Gill, and *War—What Does the Bible Say?* by J. B. Coates. The publishers are the Sheldon Press and the price of each volume is 1s. 6d.

Yours sincerely,

2 H. De Laan

Subscriptions.—The rate of subscriptions to the News-Letter is 12s. 6d. (\$3 in U.S.A. and Canada) for one year, and 6s. 6d. (\$1.50 in U.S.A. and Canada) for six months, and 3s. 6d. for three months.

All communications and subscriptions should be sent to—

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, 20, BALCOMBE STREET, DORSET SQUARE, LONDON, N.W.1.

Published by Dr. J. H. Oldham for the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life and printed by St. Clements Press, Ltd., Portugal Street, London, W.C.2.

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YOUTH, THE WAR AND THE FUTURE.

"The vision we must all see," it was said in a recent issue of *The Times Educational Supplement*, "is that of a united nation caring corporately for its adolescent population, determined to create the environment and the organisation which will enable them to make the most of their lives. The entire nation must be made to see this vision."

This vision was caught by some people during the last war and led to the passing of the Fisher Act of 1918. But in the years of depression which followed the vision faded and energies flagged, and the provisions of the Act were never brought into general operation.

In 1940 we see things differently from 1918. Circumstances and needs have changed and new insights have been gained in the interval.

The Fisher Act was conceived almost wholly in terms of providing for further schooling. What must be attempted in 1940 must be conceived on other lines. It must take account of the fact that at the adolescent stage the best education may be something that is acquired by those who are not aware that they are being educated at all. The wisest course may be to attack the problems from another end than that of formal instruction, and to round out the scheme later with what needs to be done in providing for further school education.

There is a double task—first, to meet the needs of the great mass of the population who leave school at the age of fourteen and receive little care or help after that age; and, secondly, to widen and vitalise the education now being given to those who remain at school. A too scholastic education needs to be broadened out to ensure the harmonious growth of the personality as a whole. What the adolescent needs above everything else is to be given a satisfying central purpose.

THE COUNTY BADGE PLAN

A growing number of people of the most varied types of experience have become convinced that the most promising approach to the whole problem is through what has come to be known as the County Badge Plan. There

has been a good deal of discussion about the plan, but there does not appear to be available in print a clear and simple statement of what it is. It is not a new educational fad, but an attempt to combine in a workable plan the insights and experience of the best educators and leaders of youth movements. It draws its inspiration from many sources—from Plato, the English Public Schools, the Boy Scout Movement, Youth Movements in pre-Nazi Germany, in Finland and other countries.

The idea is that there should be established in each educational area a badge to be awarded on the passing of three tests.

(1) The first test is for running, jumping, throwing and swimming. It is an important feature of the scheme that there are *two* standards of achievement—one within the reach of all who are willing to stretch their natural powers, and a higher standard for those who are capable of moderate, all-round distinction. It is the special object of this double standard that there should be a test which every boy who is willing to exert himself can pass, so that none need be discouraged. Moreover, the award of the Badge can be adapted, and is in fact adapted, to meet the special case of those who suffer from any particular physical disability.

There could be no greater blunder than to confuse the County Badge Movement with a campaign for physical fitness as an end in itself. The movement is concerned from first to last with the adolescent as a human, that is to say, spiritual and moral, being. If it takes an interest in his physical welfare, it is because the body is the God-given instrument of expression and action at every level. The object of the training of the body is to achieve a disciplined release of the spirit.

While the tests are physical in form, the objective from first to last is moral and spiritual. As all educators know, moral growth is in a very limited degree promoted, and may even be hindered, by direct moral instruction. The real problem in education is to find the right *incentives* to call forth the strivings in which moral character is formed.

Particularly in the period of adolescence must education be related to the impulses which press for release in the growing boy or girl and to the standards of achievement in which he or she can find fulfilment. The incentives which make the strongest appeal at this stage are those which spring from the desire of the adolescent to test his bodily powers and thereby achieve a sense of self-mastery. Much of the dangerous unrest, frustration and moral distortion which are found to-day come from the thwarting of this fundamental need.

The aim of the physical tests is to enable the growing boy to measure himself against something real, objective and intractable, and so to acquire the reliance, self-mastery and confidence in his own powers which is the basis of all character. The purpose is to give him a willing body. From a willing body springs readiness for enterprise. The door is opened to every kind of moral and spiritual adventure, individual and collective.

(2) The second test is taking part in an expedition. This may be walking, climbing, sailing, riding, exploring, animal watching or other similar activity. The expedition is of cardinal importance. It provides opportunities of developing habits of observation, resource, initiative and endurance. It teaches a love of the open country. Like the athletic tests, the expedition test may be conducted in mechanical fashion and accomplish little, but under the right leadership it can be made the means of learning to hold to one's course in the face of hardships, discomforts, dangers and the impulses of the moment. It is an opportunity for evoking all the qualities which make for responsibility, comradeship, and good citizenship. It has the power to bind together those who take part in it in a fellowship of adventure, service and solid achievement.

It is the experience of educators that relatively few boys pass through puberty without some loss of human strength—the native delight in truth, power of sympathy, spirit of enterprise, alertness and perseverance in curiosity. The remedy is to give to boys in this critical period an interest that can become a passion and draw to itself their emotional strength. That is what training on the lines suggested may bring about.

(3) Thirdly, it is an essential element of the plan that, in addition to the general tests, there should be one that is variable and can be adapted to the conditions of different localities. Into this gap regional tradition, crafts, folklore, initiative and enthusiasm can pour their

contribution. Without constant invigoration by spontaneous local initiative and creative leadership the plan is in danger of becoming flat and mechanical. Quoit-throwing in Lanarkshire, the sword-dance in Northumberland, wrestling in Cornwall, the Guides' race in Cumberland may all be brought in to enrich the educational process. In the Sudan the local tradition has been fostered by the introduction of hunting, including the use of the native throwing-stick (*safarog*). It has been suggested by an African educator that in Africa large use might be made of folk-song and dance, the great social inheritance of the African child.

These last illustrations show that the plan has a flexibility that makes it capable of adaptation to the different parts of the British Commonwealth. It may thus be a means of drawing closer the bonds between its diverse peoples.

There are, of course, difficulties in applying this type of education to the dwellers in our large cities. But it is precisely the town boy, who knows only East-end streets, for whom four weeks in camp may open a new window on life. The time can be used to give him new tastes and to plan with him for the use of his leisure to continue even in adverse conditions the training begun in camp.

The *badge* is a vital element in the scheme. It is not enough simply to define certain standards and allow boys to pass them. The badge creates the sense of belonging to a community. It admits those who qualify for it into a brotherhood dedicated to a life of self-discipline in the service of their fellows.

RELIGIOUS POSSIBILITIES

The religious implications and possibilities of the scheme are of prime importance. No movement of youth can fulfil itself without religious inspiration. There are here a host of problems which call for fresh, continuous and sensitive consideration. In thinking about them two things must be kept clearly in view.

First, we must dismiss firmly from our minds the idea that there is any general religion, common to all men of good-will, which can form the basis of the movement. There are only particular religions, and their teachings differ. The question that concerns us is the relation between the movement and the Christian faith.

Secondly, in regard to this question we must keep quite distinct in our minds two different, though related and complementary, aspects.

There is, first, the specific provision of opportunities of Christian worship and teaching. If Christians take a full share and initiative in the movement, and if the matter is gone about in the right way, there is no reason why in a country with a Christian tradition there should not be, on Sunday and other occasions, gatherings in which those who have obtained, or are working for, the badge find in Christian worship and teaching their deepest unity and most powerful inspiration.

There is, however, a second aspect of religious education which is for the most part less appreciated and therefore needs greater emphasis. The plan that has been outlined aims at restoring the natural life of a boy to health. Its purpose is to create conditions in which the conscience can freely operate, liberated from emotional bondage and cramping perversions. It seeks to foster the spirit of brotherhood and mutual service through shared activities and adventures. Those who have learned in the experience of life to love their fellow-men are on the road which leads to the knowledge of God.

Such a preparation of the soil would be of incomparable importance for the evangelistic ministry of the Church, even if the activities of the movement did not pass beyond the antechamber of religion. The greatest enemy of religion is the deafness of the soul. The proposed education would be accomplishing a Christian work even if it concerned itself only with the repair and improvement of the *receiver*, leaving the direct transmission of the message to the Church. Modern civilisation saps the strength of the adolescent. A movement which would help to conserve and restore that strength offers a splendid chance to Christianity. Those who have the imagination to see the new possibilities must rejoice in the opportunity and grasp it with both hands.

The oneness of the service of God and of man finds expression in the pledge of the Watcher Corps formed to watch the coasts of Morayshire and bring aid to ships in trouble: "I promise to serve Hopeman village and this district, through them my King and Country, and Christ through all."

THE OPPORTUNITY OF WARTIME

The war offers an unprecedented opportunity for the service of youth. Educators have striven in vain in the past to overcome the forces of national apathy and inertia. Now suddenly everything is in motion and fluid. Those who have the courage to seize the situation have a chance that may never recur.

What could possibly do more to redeem the infinite tragedy of the war than that it should leave us as a permanent legacy new foundations on which to rear a finer manhood and womanhood than the nation has ever known in the past?

But in order to effect a far-reaching transformation we must enlist the support of motives that are predominant in the mind of the nation at the present time. Those who have a far-sighted educational vision are in a minority. To provide an education that will enable a boy to become the right kind of *man* will incidentally endow him with the qualities that will make him a good *soldier*. The type of education that has been described provides a valuable pre-military training. Compass marching, map-reading and drawing, scouting, exploring, and country games all help to develop the "Red Indian" virtues. Such pre-military training may shorten the military training proper by weeks or months. There is no reason why we should not use this fact as a means of enlisting the support of those whose primary responsibility it is at this time to see that the nation has the best soldiers, sailors and airmen that it can obtain; or why training in the requirements of open-air life, because it has a high military value, should lead to militarism.

The point cannot be too firmly grasped that, if we want far-reaching educational reform, we can obtain it in war-time only if it can be shown to be a political necessity. The nation, when it is fighting for its life, cannot sit down and work out all the details of a comprehensive educational system. The only things that can be done are those which have some immediate relevance to the war. The arguments that can be *heard* are not educational but political. And it is just those arguments that are at our disposal. Therein lies the supreme opportunity.

There is nothing that would do more to breathe fresh hope into our own people, and to encourage the well-wishers of this country, than a bold, imaginative attempt to create an alert, resourceful manhood and womanhood to sustain the burden of war as long as may be necessary and capable of carrying through the tasks of peace. There is nothing that would more quickly paralyse the dictators, who have boasted of having at their command a better trained, more disciplined and more enthusiastic youth than the supposedly decadent democracies, than that the latter should manifest a greater capacity to evoke and inspire the latent resources of the coming generation.

ORGANISATION

How can the plan best be initiated and carried through? It does not profess, of course, to be a comprehensive and complete plan for meeting the needs of youth; that must wait till after the war. It is put forward only as the most promising approach to the problem and the most feasible thing to be done in war-time.

Since means are straitened, it must obviously be a basal principle that all available resources should be drawn upon to the utmost. The fullest use must be made of the experience and resources of the voluntary organisations concerned with youth. Further advance must rest on existing foundations.

The plan must necessarily depend to a large extent on the Board of Education. It can be effective only if it is intimately related to the educational structure of the country.

On the other hand, it belongs to the essence of the plan that it is an attempt to break new ground in appealing to motives of a non-scholastic kind. The rigidity of the traditional framework may strangle such an effort at the birth. The very virtues of the existing system make those familiar with them blind to something that lies clean outside of them. It seems necessary, therefore, that it should be sponsored by somebody more comprehensive than the Board of Education alone. Other departments of Government are also directly concerned—the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour, for example, as well as the Army, Navy and Air Force.

The suggestion has found increasing favour in many quarters that the direction should be placed in the hands of a group of Commissioners of Youth—say, two for England, one for Scotland and one for Wales. They would bring to the enterprise a fresh outlook untrammelled by tradition. Their responsibility would be to get the plan universally understood, to establish the right links with interested parties, including the local education authorities and the voluntary organisations, to pass on experience from one area to another, and to help in overcoming the many obstacles to the growth of a genuinely national movement.

If there are those who scent danger in any suggestion of the leadership principle, they would do well to ask themselves whether democracy can grapple with the tasks of the present century unless it can call to its aid,

in peace as in war, all the gifts of imagination, vision, inspiration and energy that it can command.

It is essential that the development of the proposed plan should not be left simply to local discretion and initiative. The Government must make it plain to local authorities that the task is imperative, ranking in importance with other forms of education, and must also provide the necessary financial resources.

Before issuing a clarion call to youth, the Government will no doubt wish to assure itself that the necessary preparation has been made for carrying out a national programme. The first step is to gain experience in selected areas. A beginning in this has happily already been made. Hertfordshire as well as Morayshire has already adopted the County Badge Scheme and the plan is being considered elsewhere. An experimental course was held this summer in Wales for the training of leaders. It was attended by over sixty boys between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, drawn from different social strata. Observers from various organisations were greatly impressed. Thirty-five badges were awarded—a much larger number than was expected. Gordonstoun School is ready to arrange for ten courses in the year, each lasting for four weeks and providing for two hundred short-term boarders. Particulars may be obtained from the Headmaster, Gordonstoun School, Plas Dinam, Llandinan, Montgomeryshire.

While preparation is needed before a national scheme can be brought into full operation, it is essential not to lose sight of the far-reaching political significance of a national youth movement to which attention has already been directed. These political issues, affecting the progress of the war, call for immediate, bold and imaginative action. A plan is needed that can be presented both to our own people and to the world as the whole-hearted dedication of the nation to the service of its youth. The proposal to set up a directorate for physical training under the Board of Education is quite insufficient for this purpose. It is too partial and limited in scope, and is no resounding answer to the pretensions of the totalitarian states. Only an effort invested with the authority and prestige of the Prime Minister can achieve the desired end in view.